

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A method for providing to one or more contributors information related to the goods or services offered by the contributors, the method comprising the steps of:
 - a. compiling the information related to the goods or services offered by the one or more contributors;
 - b. creating an information database of the compiled information, wherein the information database is segregated for each of the contributors into a first information group of the information related only to an individual contributor seeking access to the information database and a second information group of the information related to all other contributors; and
 - c. enabling each of the one or more contributors to access its own first information group, and to access the second information group without permitting any of the one or more contributors to determine which of the other contributors provided what information of the second information group.
2. The method as claimed in Claim 1 wherein the information includes product and service features, sales information, pricing information, demographic information, and time period information obtained from the one or more contributors, other non-contributor parties, or a combination of both.
3. The method as claimed in Claim 1 further comprising the step of denying to a particular contributor access to selected information from the second information group if that particular contributor does not provide the same selected information of its own.
4. The method as claimed in Claim 1 further comprising the step of enabling the one or more contributors to access and query the database directly for specific market information of interest.
5. The method as claimed in Claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
 - a. enabling each of the one or more contributors to define a query of the compiled information based on individual portions of the information or selectable

combinations of individual portions of the information to create unique outcomes;
and

- b. generating statistics based upon the outcomes obtained based upon the query.

6. The method as claimed in Claim 5 wherein the step of generating statistics includes for each contributor performing such step the steps of:

- a. calculating statistics related only to the first information group;
- b. determining with respect to the second information group that a defined minimum amount of the information related to the particular query made by the querying contributor exists; and
- c. presenting to the querying contributor statistical information only for defined information of the first information group and of the second information group that meets the restriction of step b.

7. The method as claimed in Claim 1 further comprising the step of storing a portion or all of the output of any query of the database.

8. The method as claimed in Claim 1 further comprising the step of transferring a portion or all of the output of any query of the database to an electronic spreadsheet.

9. The method as claimed in Claim 1 further comprising the step of enabling a contributor to supplement information of the first information group with selectable information of its own accessible only by that contributor.

10. The method as claimed in Claim 1 further comprising the step of enabling the storage of attributes of a query for subsequent retrieval.

11. The method as claimed in Claim 10 further comprising the step of enabling the retrieval of a stored query and its re-use or its modification to create a new query.

12. The method as claimed in Claim 1 wherein the step of enabling each contributor to access its own first information group and to access information of the second information group without permitting any of the one or more contributors to determine which of the other contributors provided what information of the second information group includes the steps of:

- c1. in response to a query from a contributor, determining with respect to the second information group that a defined minimum amount of the defined information related to the particular query exists; and
- c2. presenting to the querying contributor the requested information only for defined information of the second information group that meets the restriction of step c1.

13. The method as claimed in Claim 1 wherein the step of enabling each contributor to access its own first information group and to access information of the second information group without permitting any of the one or more contributors to determine which of the other contributors provided what information of the second information group includes the step of establishing rules of access to information of the second information group.

14. The method as claimed in Claim 1 wherein a contributor seeking access to the information database does so through a graphical user interface represented on a display of a computing device through which the contributor accesses the information database, the method further comprising the step of configuring one or more outputs of the information accessed into summary representations.

15. The method as claimed in Claim 1 further comprising the step of configuring the graphical user interface to present a summary depiction of database query options and queries made.

16. The method as claimed in Claim 1 wherein the information database includes a plurality of cells of information organized based on values, the method further comprising the step of

configuring one or more outputs of the information accessed into summary representations organized by parameter.

17. The method as claimed in Claim 16 further comprising the step of establishing rules for suppressing certain ones of the plurality of cells for summary representation.

18. The method as claimed in Claim 1 further comprising the step of configuring one or more query options for a contributor to query the information database for display on a computer display in a format that eliminates from display a query option not applicable to the defined portion of information to be queried.

19. The method as claimed in Claim 1 further comprising the step of configuring a computer program to enable querying of the information database by a contributor, analysis of the information acquired in a query, and reporting of the information, wherein the program may operate on a computing system of the contributor independent of any other programs running on the same computing system.

20. The method as claimed in Claim 1 further comprising the step of establishing standardized query formats and output formats selectable by the querying contributor.

21. The method as claimed in Claim 1 further comprising the step of presenting database information obtained from a query into a format relating the contributor's corresponding information from the first information group to corresponding information of the second information group.

22. The method as claimed in Claim 1 further comprising the steps of enabling a contributor to query the information database for information of interest and limiting query options to be consistent with values of the information database.

23. A method for providing to contributors in one or more industries market information related to the offerings made by the contributors, such market information including market information of contributors and non-contributors, the method comprising the steps of:

- a. surveying each contributor for defined public and private product and services information;
- b. compiling the defined public and private product and services information obtained from all surveyed contributors and market information from non-contributors;
- c. creating for each contributor an information database of the defined public and private product and services information obtained from all contributors and the market information of the non-contributors, wherein each contributor's information database is segregated into a first information group of an individual contributor's particular defined public and private product and services information and a second information group of the compiled defined public and private product and services information of all other contributors and of the market information of the non-contributors; and
- d. enabling each contributor to access its own first information group and to access information of the second information group without permitting any of the one or more contributors to determine which of the other contributors provided what information of the second information group.

24. The method as claimed in Claim 23 further comprising the step of configuring an output according to one or more parameters unique to a particular querying contributor as defined by that querying contributor.

25. The method as claimed in Claim 23 further comprising the step of enabling the contributors to access and query the database directly for specific market information of interest.

26. A graphical user interface system configured to enable one or more users to observe one or more summary representations of one or more sets of information stored in a computing system, wherein the one or more summary representations are observable on the display of a computing device, the graphical user interface system comprising a computer program configured to display on the display of the computing device one or more screen representations of information selection options and, for at least one of the information selection options, adjacent to the at least one information selection options, a representation of an information selection previously made.